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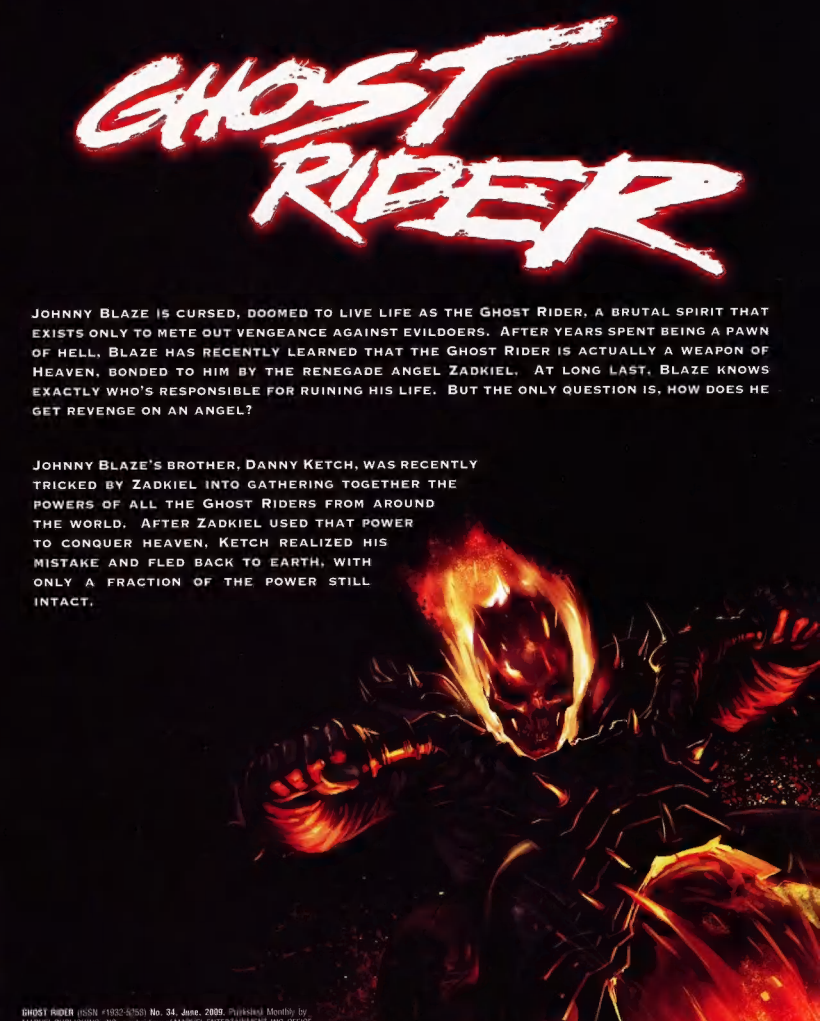
GHOST RIDER

JOHNNY BLAZE IS CURSED, DOOMED TO LIVE LIFE AS THE GHOST RIDER, A BRUTAL SPIRIT THAT EXISTS ONLY TO METE OUT VENGEANCE AGAINST EVILDOERS. AFTER YEARS SPENT BEING A PAWN OF HELL, BLAZE HAS RECENTLY LEARNED THAT THE GHOST RIDER IS ACTUALLY A WEAPON OF HEAVEN, BONDED TO HIM BY THE RENEGADE ANGEL ZADKIEL. AT LONG LAST, BLAZE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR RUINING HIS LIFE. BUT THE ONLY QUESTION IS, HOW DOES HE GET REVENGE ON AN ANGEL?

JOHNNY BLAZE'S BROTHER, DANNY KETCH, WAS RECENTLY TRICKED BY ZADKIEL INTO GATHERING TOGETHER THE POWERS OF ALL THE GHOST RIDERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. AFTER ZADKIEL USED THAT POWER TO CONQUER HEAVEN, KETCH REALIZED HIS MISTAKE AND FLED BACK TO EARTH, WITH ONLY A FRACTION OF THE POWER STILL INTACT.



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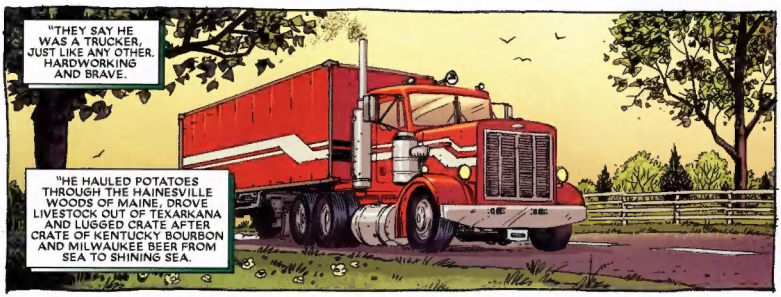
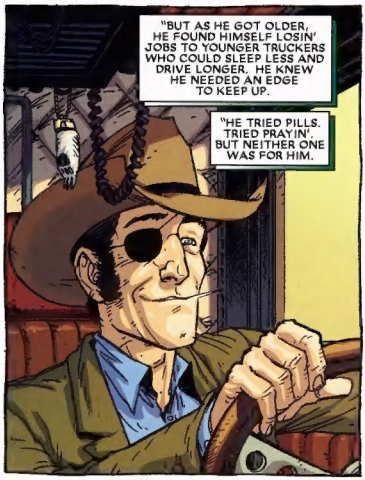
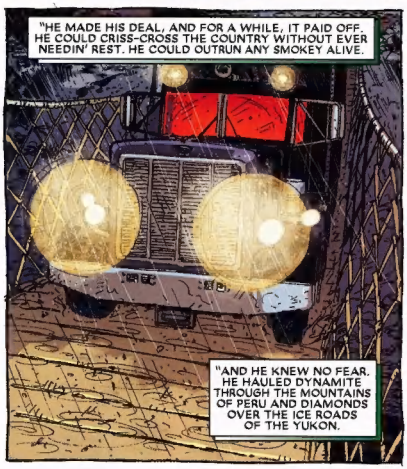
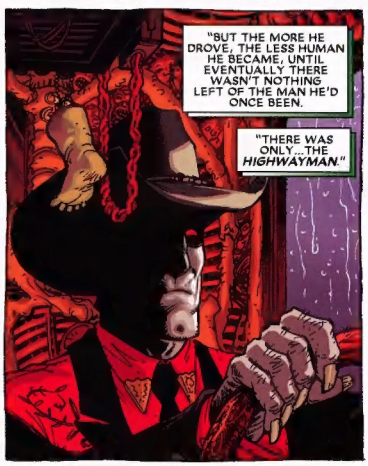

"THEY SAY HE WAS A TRUCKER, JUST LIKE ANY OTHER. HARDWORKING AND BRAVE.
"HE HAULED POTATOES THROUGH THE HAINESVILLE WOODS OF MAINE, DROVE LIVESTOCK OUT OF TEXARKANA AND LUGGED CRATE AFTER CRATE OF KENTUCKY BOURBON AND MILWAUKEE BEER FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA.


"BUT AS HE GOT OLDER, HE FOUND HIMSELF LOSIN' JOBS TO YOUNGER TRUCKERS WHO COULD SLEEP LESS AND DRIVE LONGER. HE KNEW HE NEEDED AN EDGE TO KEEP UP.
"HE TRIED PILLS. TRIED PRAYIN'. BUT NEITHER ONE WAS FOR HIM.

"SO HE LOOKED ELSEWHERE FOR HELP.


"HE MADE HIS DEAL, AND FOR A WHILE, IT PAID OFF. HE COULD CRISS-CROSS THE COUNTRY WITHOUT EVER NEEDIN' REST. HE COULD OUTRUN ANY SMOKEY ALIVE.
"AND HE KNEW NO FEAR. HE HAULED DYNAMITE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS OF PERU AND DIAMONDS OVER THE ICE ROADS OF THE YUKON.

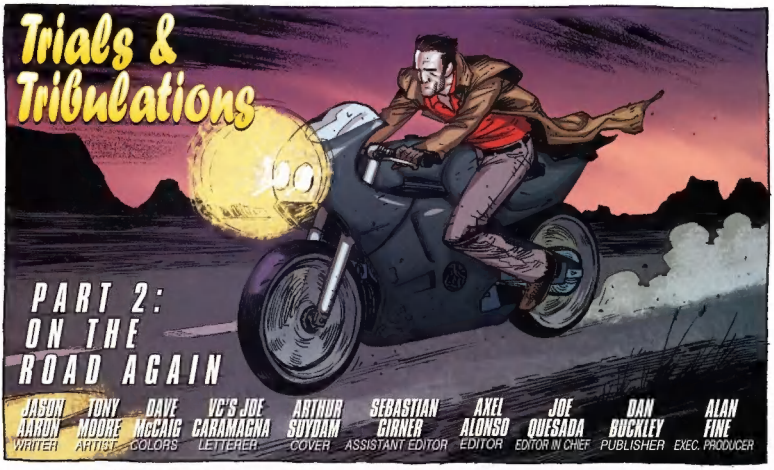

"BUT THE MORE HE DROVE, THE LESS HUMAN HE BECAME, UNTIL EVENTUALLY THERE WASN'T NOTHING LEFT OF THE MAN HE'D ONCE BEEN.
"THERE WAS ONLY... THE *HIGHWAYMAN.*"

SOME SAY HE'S STILL OUT THERE, DRIVIN' THOSE 18 WHEELS OF HELLFIRE CALLED THE BLACK RIG, HAULIN' THE DEVIL'S LOADS...
THE LAUGHIN' ARMADILLO
TRUCK SERVICE DINER
AND HARVESTIN' SOULS FOR HIS DARK MASTER.
THEY SAY HE TAKES THE HEAD OF ANY POOR FOOL UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO CROSS HIS PATH.
HA!
THAT'S THE BIGGEST LOAD OF BUNK I EVER HEARD.
YEAH, J.D., THAT'S ALMOST AS CRAZY AS THE ONE YOU TOLD ABOUT THE GUY WHO COULD PICK UP CB SIGNALS ON THE METAL PLATE IN HIS SKULL.
LAUGH IF YA WANT, BUT I WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO DISMISS IT. YOU HEARD ABOUT FRANKIE PENWALD, FOUND OUT ON I-29 WITH HIS HEAD LOPPED OFF?
FRANKIE PENWALD WAS A DRUNK WHO DROVE INTO A CLIFF FACE. THAT'S WHAT KNOCKED HIS DURN FOOL HEAD OFF. WEREN'T NO TRUCKER-BOOGEYMAN, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I DON'T KNOW.
ANYBODY SEEN BIG ED? HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BUY ME DINNER.
YONDER HE COMES.
COMING IN KINDA FAST, AIN'T HE?
YOU SURE THAT'S BIG ED? I CAN'T MAKE OUT HIS FACE.

FLAMMABLE
3
FR4-XIN

WHOOSH

HEH HEH HEH
VVROOOOM
KA-KLATCH
WWWWUUURRRR
WUUURRRR
HAIL, SATAN, YOU SUM-BITCHES...
HA HA HA HAH HAAAHH!



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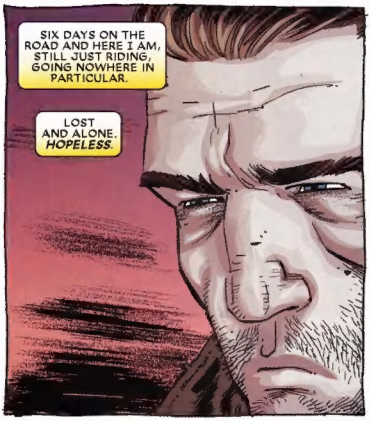
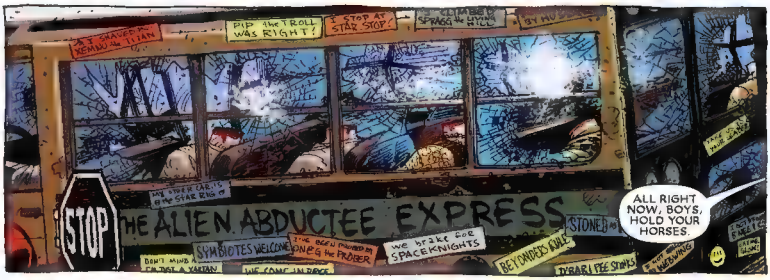
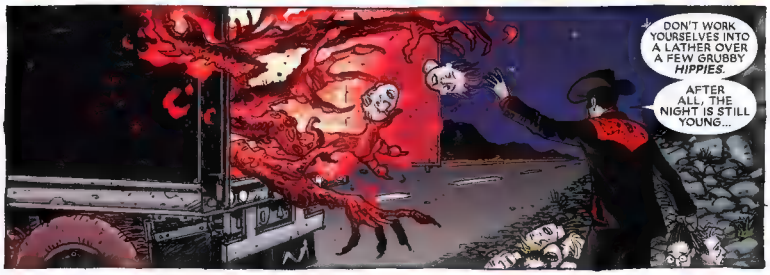


WHATEVER HAPPENED HERE, IT'S NONE OF MY CONCERN.
LORD KNOWS I GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES OF MY OWN ALREADY.
JUST WANNA KEEP ON *RIDING*.
C'MON...
MOVE. YOU STUPID BIKE. GO!
BUT IT WON'T LET ME LEAVE.
TO HELL WITH YOU. I'LL *WALK*.
IF ONLY IT WAS THAT EASY.
OH, NO.
NO NO NO NO...

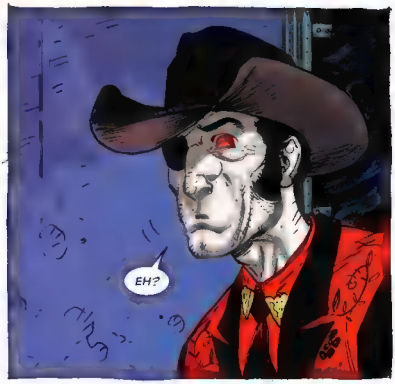
ARRGGHH!!!
MY NAME IS DANNY KETCH, AND THIS IS MY LIFE NOW.
A WEEK AGO, I ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN WITH THE POWER OF EVERY GHOST RIDER IN THE WORLD ALL AT MY FINGERTIPS. MY DAYS OF BEING CURSED WERE BEHIND ME...OR SO I THOUGHT.
MOMENTS LATER I FELL BACK TO EARTH...
MORE CURSED THAN EVER BEFORE.

I THOUGHT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING, RIDDING OTHERS OF THEIR BURDEN.
NOW *I'M* THE ONE WITH THE BURDEN TO BEAR.
AND IT'S EXACTLY WHAT I DESERVE.
I AM A *SLAVE* TO VENGEANCE NOW. THAT IS MY PENANCE.
THAT'S THE PRICE I GOTTA PAY. EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF MY MISERABLE LIFE. THAT'S THE *HELL* I HAVE TO ENDURE...
FOR LAYING WASTE TO *HEAVEN.*


PIP the TROLL WAS RIGHT!
STOP
THE ALIEN ABDUCTEE EXPRESS
SYMBIOTES WELCOME
WE BRAKE FOR SPACEKNIGHTS
BEYONDER'S KIDS
ALL RIGHT NOW, BOYS, HOLD YOUR HORSES.


DON'T WORK YOURSELVES INTO A LATHER OVER A FEW GRUBBY HIPPIES.
AFTER ALL, THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG...

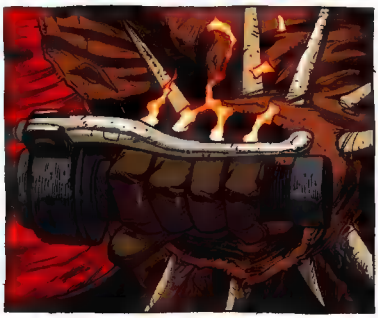
THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.

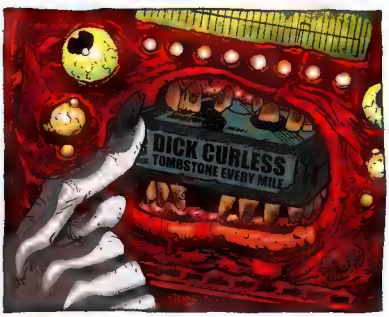

EH?

WHOOOSH
VVRRROOOOOOMMM!
SSKKKEEEEEEE

CRUNCH
HEH.

DAVE DUDLEY




DICK CURLESS
TOMBSTONE EVERY MILE

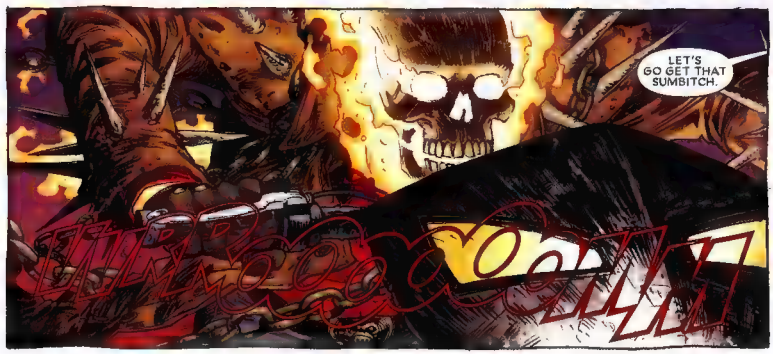
WRROOOOOMMM!
BBBBRRRRRRRMM
BRING IT ON, YA CROTCH-ROCKET RIDIN' BASTARD!
WWRROOOMM
SSKKRREEEEEEEEETTCCHH

SONUVA...
DON'T YOU WORRY, BERTHA, OLD GAL. YOU JUST KEEP IT TOGETHER. DADDY'S GONNA MAKE HIM *PAY* FOR THAT.

DADDY'S GONNA TEACH THIS MOTHERLESS CYCLE JOCKEY THE RULES OF THE ROAD.

DON'T *NOTHIN'* DEFY THE HIGHWAYMAN. 'SPECIALLY NOT NO PANSY-ASS TWO-WHEELER DRIVEN BY SOME PISSANT SKELETON WITH A *GREASEFIRE* FOR A FACE.
IF THERE'S ANY *GUTS* IN THAT BODY O' HIS, BERTHA, WE GONE SQUEEZE 'EM OUT AND USE 'EM TO GREASE YOUR AXLES, BABY. WE GONE MOUNT THAT SKULL ON YOUR HOOD AND RIDE IT STRAIGHT TO HELL, BY GOD.

C'MON, OLD GIRL, GIVE IT ALL YA GOT NOW...


LET'S GO GET THAT SUMBITCH.
BURROOOOOM!!!

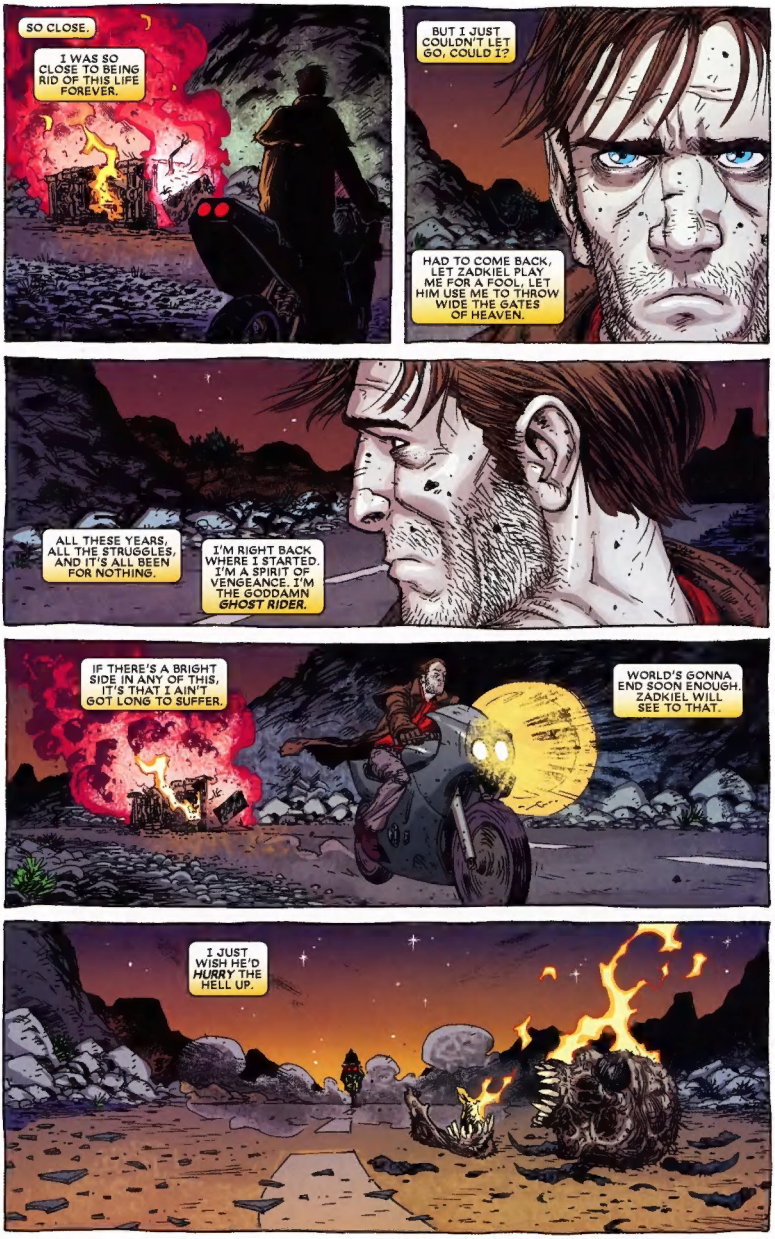
ROAD CLOSED
BRIDGE OUT
KRUNK

HA! GOT YA NOW, YA LITTLE WEASEL!
LET'S SEE YA *EVEL KNIEVEL* YOUR ASS OUTTA THIS ONE!
THE BOYS DOWN SOUTH ARE GONNA *LOVE* YOU! I'M GONNA FEED 'EM YOUR SOUL A PINCH AT A TIME! LET 'EM *NIBBLE* ON IT LIKE MAGGOTS FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!
YOU HEAR ME, BOY!
NIBBLE ON *THIS*.
SMAASH
HA! YOU *MISSED* ME, YA COCKEYED BAG A' BONES!

HA HA HAAA HAA HAAA!
SHUNK
WELL, HELL...

C'MON OVER HERE, YOU PATHETIC LITTLE WHELP!
HEAVEN'S HARLOT?
YOU AND YOUR BROTHER ARE BOTH FINISHED. YOU HEAR ME?
NOBLE KALE IS DEAD. WE TORE HIM TO SHREDS AND FED HIM TO THE--
BLACKHEART SAYS HI.
YOUR MOTHER SEWS SOCKS THAT SMELL.
YOUR SISTER IS WITH US HERE. YOU WANNA--
C'MON OVER HERE. I DARE YA.
TAKE THAT SKULL AND GO TO TOWN ON IT, YA HEAR ME?

BIKE-RIDIN' BASTARD. HE'S GONNA PAY. GONNA KILL HIM. GONNA [illegible] THOSE BONES TO DUST. GONNA EAT HIS GUTS WITH A SPOON. GONNA--
HEY! HEY. PUT ME DOWN, YOU STUPID LUG!
I WILL MAKE YOU WISH YOU WERE NEVER BORN, YOU PATHETIC LITTLE S#!%BAG. I'M GONNA TAKE THAT *#!%ING BIKE OF YOURS AND I'M GONNA SHOVE IT UP YOUR--
FWOOOOOSSH
HAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!


SO CLOSE.
I WAS SO CLOSE TO BEING RID OF THIS LIFE FOREVER.
BUT I JUST COULDN'T LET GO, COULD I?
HAD TO COME BACK, LET ZADKIEL PLAY ME FOR A FOOL, LET HIM USE ME TO THROW WIDE THE GATES OF HEAVEN.
ALL THESE YEARS, ALL THE STRUGGLES, AND IT'S ALL BEEN FOR NOTHING.
I'M RIGHT BACK WHERE I STARTED. I'M A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. I'M THE GODDAMN *GHOST RIDER.*
IF THERE'S A BRIGHT SIDE IN ANY OF THIS, IT'S THAT I AIN'T GOT LONG TO SUFFER.
WORLD'S GONNA END SOON ENOUGH. ZADKIEL WILL SEE TO THAT.
I JUST WISH HE'D *HURRY* THE HELL UP.

GHOST WRITERS

This Tony Moore guy is pretty good, right? Without a doubt he has just delivered the best-looking trucker horror story you are likely to read anytime soon. Before we move on to the mailbag, I gotta thank a couple of people for inspiring this issue. The Hurley brothers are friends of mine who put on a cool little comic convention in Joplin, Missouri. At one show I was browsing the books they had for sale, and they talked me into picking up a complete run of Marvel's US-1 series from the 80s. If you don't know, US-1 featured the adventures of truck driving hero U.S. Archer, who after surgery to put a metal plate in his head found he could pick up CB signals on his skull (I call this the coolest super power ever). Archer's brother and arch-enemy was known as The Highwayman, demonic driver of The Black Rig. So if I die tomorrow, please let it be known that my greatest gift to mankind was that I brought The Highwayman back to the pages of Marvel Comics. You're all welcome. And thanks to the Hurleys and Tony Moore for making it all possible. Now let's rip open that mailbag.

Dear Ghost Rider Crew,

My name its Guillermo and I wanted to tell you that you have made this mag into pure badassery! Seriously, the colors by Villarrubia are beautiful, the art by Tan is thrilling, especially the fight scenes. And I love the stories and plots that Jason devises.

Ghost Rider has always been one of my favorite heroes! To be honest even before I knew who he really was, his marvel trading card was my favorite when I was a kid. However recently I picked up one of the issues and I got instantly hooked into it.
I also got a couple of questions:

Blue Ghost Rider Danny Ketch is super cool! It defines his character and looks very fresh. I know that it is a sign that he is related to Zadkiel but could he keep the color when he goes Ghost Rider mode again?

Any chances on seeing more of the Shark Rider? He was really cool.

Also Sister Sara is badass! She should stay with Johnny. She has character and the legacy of her family must continue.

The idea of power coming from Heaven instead of the medallion is way better!

PS. Simon Spurrier did a great job with the Danny Ketch mini as well! I got to know him from his book of Lord of The Night.

Best Regards and thank you for your time,
Guillermo

Yeah, I liked the blue look too, Guillermo, but since Ketch is no longer getting his power directly from Zadkiel, it made sense to switch back to the regular old flame color, as you can see this issue. Hope you like it too. And by the way, I think the transformation scene that Tony drew this issue features some of the coolest shots of melting flesh that we've ever seen in GHOST RIDER. High praise indeed!

There seems to be a groundswell of support for seeing more of the Shark Rider. I'll see what I can do.

I agree. Hope you liked last issue's Caretaker-centric tale.

Thanks! I'm sure having fun with it.

P.S. Yeah, Simon is great. If you missed out on the DANNY KETCH mini-series, look for the trade paperback this summer, as well as the next two trades of my run.

Dear Ghost Riders:

I am writing this letter to you because after reading the climax to "Last Stand of the Spirits of Vengeance" story arc, all I can say is that I'm a very happy reader because of the status quo regarding Danny Ketch. Don't get me wrong, I like Johnny Blaze but Danny has a portion of the power of the Ghost Rider which would make him the hottest character around (no pun intended). Do you think that Johnny and Danny will be sharing the book? Is Johnny still the Spirit of Vengeance? I don't know and frankly, I don't care because I'll definitely look forward to more of Danny Ketch in the future with hopefully his brother on board.

Albert Evans

Hey, Albert, as you can see from this issue, things aren't so rosy for Danny Ketch. He really seems to be paying the price for his role in Zadkiel's war against heaven. I wonder what lengths he might go to try and make up for that? Stay tuned.

Dear: Ghost Writers

My name is Mike Ward. I've been a huge fan of GR for a long time now. Jason, you're a great writer and I love Tony Moore's art work. You guys are a perfect team with the way that you tell your stories and how Moore's art fits perfectly to the story. I just have a few questions for you, Jason.

Are you going to have GR have any tie-ins with the Dark Reign like there was with the Civil War?
Are you going to have a story with Satan soon?
What made you choose to write for GR?

Thanks for your time.

KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!!
Mike Ward

No Dark Reign tie-ins coming up. Our Ghost Riders already have enough on their plates as it is.

Look for not only Satan but also The Son of Satan to play a role in the next arc.

Are you kidding? I get paid to write stories with gun-toting nurses and nunchuck-wielding nuns and bikers with their heads on fire. Is there a better job anywhere in the world, outside of Heidi Klum's towel boy or right outside linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers? I think not.

I'm 42 years old and until now I'd written exactly one fan letter in my life. I was a teenager in Birmingham, Alabama and I moped around and obsessively listened to REM's "Reckoning" for three straight months and I wrote Peter Buck a letter and told him that I thought he was God. I was wrong, he wasn't God, and neither is anyone else, so it was kinda embarrassing, but I bought him a beer many years later at a Robyn Hitchcock & the Venus Three show and he didn't remember it at all and was excruciatingly polite about the whole thing, so I guess it all worked out.

This is my second fan letter.

GHOST RIDER #33 is truly deeply wholly kick-ass hillbilly goodness, and thanks for that. I'm not a Ghost Rider reader, normally. Never followed the book as a kid, though I sorta kinda knew the outlines of Johnny Blaze's story, just from the part he'd played on the periphery of the Marvel U. But I learned from my LCS guy that you were from this neck of the woods and, my curiosity piqued, I bought the first two TPB volumes of Scalped. Liked 'em. A lot.

So I picked up GHOST RIDER #33 on a whim and got through devouring it about fifteen minutes ago.

Dude.

Wow.

Just... wow.

You have put Ghost Rider into the perfect context, the perfect whazzat word milieu. Cosmic redneck ass-kicking. Sunday better get me into Heaven cuz Saturday done landed me in Hell. God and the Devil, as closely entwined as a box of snakes at a poison-drinkin' church on Sand Mountain.

It totally works. The comic nerd in me squirmed with pleasure and got throttled by my inner redneck. I had to get up and pour a shot of Old Grand-dad and listen to the Drive-By Truckers to compose myself.

You've got a new Ghost Rider reader (who's actually been to Chickasaw County, Mississippi, but not on purpose).

Keep up the good work!

Jon
Birmingham, AL

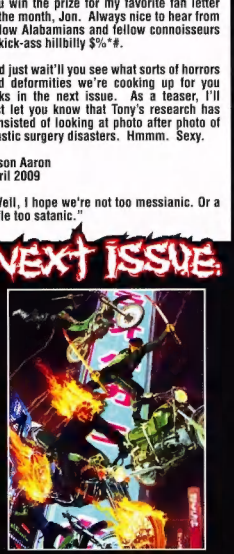
You win the prize for my favorite fan letter of the month, Jon. Always nice to hear from fellow Alabamians and fellow connoisseurs of kick-ass hillbilly $%*#.

And just wait'll you see what sorts of horrors and deformities we're cooking up for you folks in the next issue. As a teaser, I'll just let you know that Tony's research has consisted of looking at photo after photo of plastic surgery disasters. Hmmm. Sexy.

Jason Aaron
April 2009

"Well, I hope we're not too messianic. Or a trifle too satanic."

NEXT ISSUE



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A Few Days Later...
FRIEDRICH'S TRUCK OASIS
HOPE KARA SAVED ME A HUNK O' THAT MEATLOAF. I'M HUNGRY ENOUGH TO EAT A WHOLE HERD.
HEY, BUDDY...
YEAH, WHAT?
ULP
NICE RIG YA GOT THERE. TELL ME...
DOES IT HAVE AN 8-TRACK PLAYER?
The End?

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